

## THE WORDS FROM THE CROSS.

There seemed to be a special significance in the words uttered by our Lord from the cross. Each of the sayings recorded had respect to some specific relation or aspect of his mediatorial work.

Setting forth his relation to his enemies at large, he cried, as they were fastening him to the cross, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." He was as full of love towards men in that hour, as ready to forgive, as ready to save, as at any other time in all his career.

As indicating his recognition of the ties of earth, and his regard for the obligations which grew out of them, he exclaimed, when we saw Mary standing near, and John, the beloved disciple, "Behold thy mother." He saw her in her poverty and her loneliness. He knew that she was his own mother in the flesh. He felt that he must provide for her. He lovingly committed her to the care of his most trusted disciple and the one best able to cherish her. By those words he sanctified earthly ties and showed their obligation.

As showing his relation to the flesh, he cried, "I thirst." It was a true humanity that was there. He had a true body. He could suffer physically as well as in heart. His sacrifice was one of the very nature demanded by the outraged law. He was made perfect through suffering, and thus became the author of eternal salvation to all them that believe in his name.

Perhaps most significant of all were the words that expressed his relation, as hung there, to the law and justice of God. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God himself, his very Father, must turn away from him and let justice do its work. He must be regarded and dealt with, when he took his people's guilt upon himself, as if he himself had committed all their sins. "He was made sin for us." Only thus could we "be made the righteousness of God in him." It was not God's deserting him, but God's demand of a penalty for sin.

His relation to repentant sinners, even the guiltiest and most depraved, he set forth in the words, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." This he said to a malefactor who was dying near by, a thief upon another cross acknowledging that he deserved to die for his evil deeds. Mercy is held out to the wickedest. None need feel that Christ will not save them. Even in the bitter hour of his own death he could care for others and assure them of eternal life through his atoning blood.

But with all the rest, Christ realized that he still had a loving Father, and that that Father was dealing properly with him. So he exclaimed again, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." He was full of submission, obedience, and trust. He would have every one know the fountain of all grace.

The final words were a proclamation. They announced to heaven, earth, and hell, the accomplishment of redemption, the completion of the way of life. "It is finished." Every type was now fulfilled. Every promise was now met. God himself is placated. The law has been magnified and made honorable. Truth has been justified. Henceforth God can be just and yet justify the ungodly. He hath borne double for all our sins. The debt has been paid.

## IN TRAINING.

In God's work there is a royal succession, for which he himself provides. Long before Moses died, a Joshua was prepared of the Lord to take up the work. Before Elijah was translated, an Elisha was ready and trained, and Elijah's mantle did not fall upon unfitted or unfitting shoulders.

The work in all the successive generations is one. Its founder is God. He will see to it that the workers are provided against the day of need. The Lord of the harvest will send forth laborers into his harvest. There will be no break in the work as long as his hands control and shape it.

All the same the successors must be fitted. Moses' responsibility fell upon no novice in leadership. Elijah's duty as a prophet was transmitted to no apprentice. Doubtless many felt that these younger men would hardly fill their elders' places, but the event showed that God knew best. Back of each one's assumption of a great trust was an experience of years of faithful service; back of command was a life time of obedience.

In the training to succeed others there should not be mere imitation or aping. Joshua, Elijah, Samuel, David, were independent men, developed in a school of severe discipline for the work of God, but no mere copyists of their great tutors. Their own individuality showed out clearly on every occasion when the reins were put in their hands. One star differeth from another star in glory. But they are all stars. There are diversities of operations; but the same Spirit operateth in all. Large hearted and large minded men will strike out for themselves, in their own lines, though always within the limits set of God.

The best fitting for a proper succession to great men is to be found in service and obedience. Christ promised great reward in rule and power to those who are faithful in a few things. So his apostle declared that if we suffer with Christ, that is, if we undergo, are subject, with him, we shall reign with him. "If any one will be great among you, let him be your minister." No one ever commanded well who had not first learned how to obey well. Even Christ "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered."

That you may be called upon some day to lead in the work for Christ should not frighten you. The rather should it stir you to active preparation, not for the honor or dignity but for the burden and the duty. When Moses died, it is significant that God's announcement of the fact to Joshua was coupled with a command to arise at once and go over into the land given to Israel. Stop not to murmur, or shrink, or even to mourn over thy leader's death, but "Arise, be strong and of good courage."

The thought of higher service should both stimulate and make humble. That God will use us for his glory should stir our souls within us. It should make us bend every energy to the happy task of becoming ready for the trust. At the same time, it should bow our heads. For what are we, that God should honor us thus? And the greater the honor the heavier the responsibility. Therefore the more need to get the best of all preparation by lying very low at Jesus' feet.